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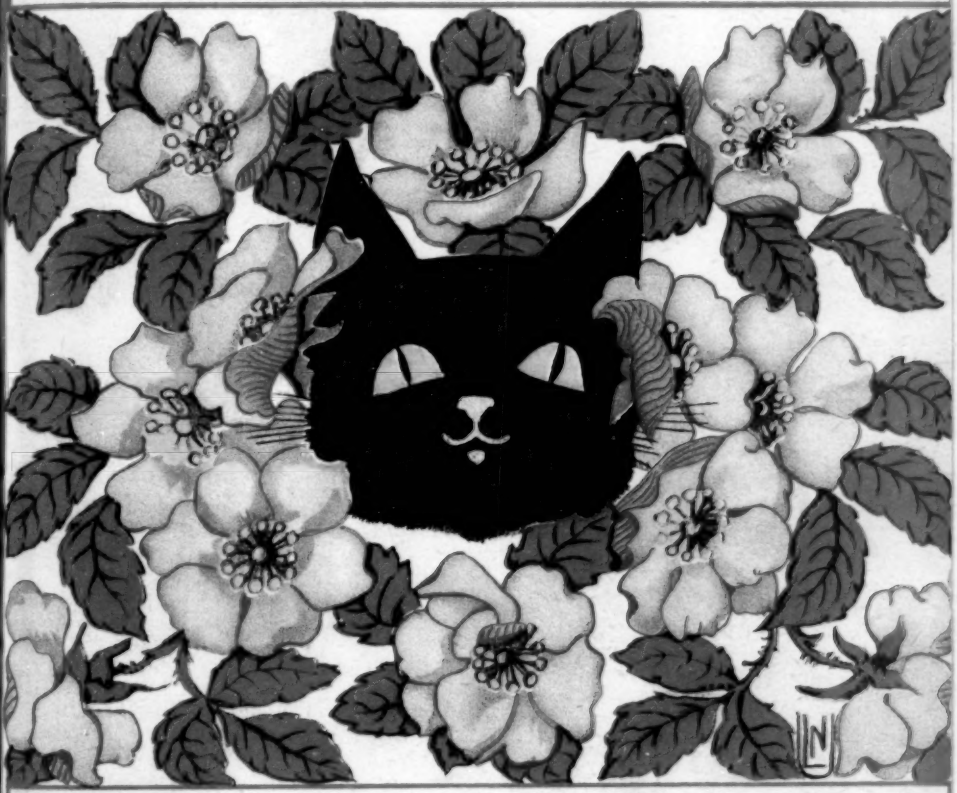

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June 1898

The Storm Warrior.
Max Wagner.
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Sam Davis.
The Scent of Jasmine.
Livingstone B. Morse.
The Iron Star.
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A Baratarian Elaine.
Henry E. Chambers.

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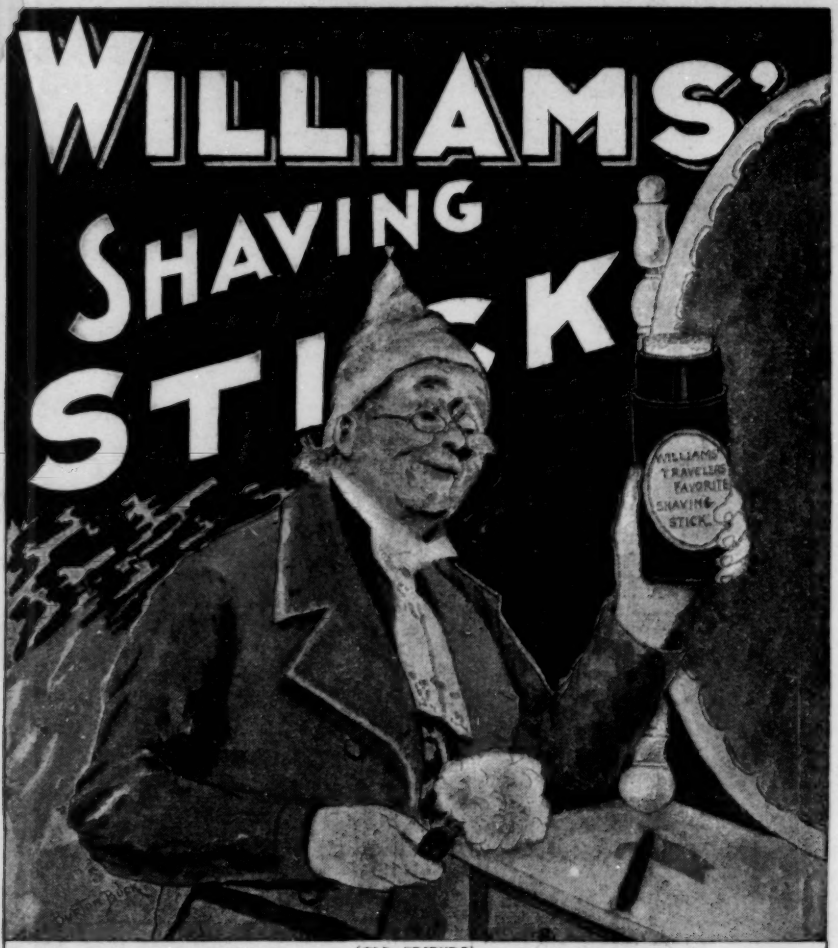

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The Black Cat

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The Storm Warrior.

BY MAX WAGNER.

CHRISTMAS, of a year within the last decade, was a day that the Surf-Side Life Saving Crew of that winter will long remember, and the never monotonous log of that stirring station contains no more thrilling record than the page that briefly describes the events of that holiday and the twenty-four hours preceding it.

The 24th of December began balmily and serenely enough; remarkably so in view of the fact that the snow-covered, ice-bound New England coast was only thirty miles away. At the first approach of dawn a dense fog had hung over land and sea, while from out its ghostly depths had come the sound of whirring wings and discordant cries as ducks and gulls flew by in search of their morning meal. But as the mist disappeared, so mild and May-like was the scene disclosed that the last dog-watch, just coming off their beat, tired and hungry though they were, involuntarily paused on the bluffs a few moments in admiration. Not a cloud floated overhead, not a breath was stirring, and hardly a ripple marred the surface of the ocean, whose glassy bosom heaved only in a gentle motion that sent a lazy swell rolling softly up the beach.

When finally the older of the two men, reminded of the rest and less æsthetic treat that awaited them at the cabin, suggested

that they "go and see what the cook had to show," his companion, "Long" Tom Coffin, moved away reluctantly. As he cast one fascinated backward glance, his gaze was suddenly riveted, and he stopped short with a quick arresting word to his companion.

Away out on the horizon where sky and water met, a wall of dark-green water rose like a huge wrinkle on the glistening surface of the ocean and rushed shoreward with incredible velocity. Sweeping across the rips and shoals that, from the South Shoal on the outside to Wiscasset on the inside, spread their treacherous network off Nantucket to catch unwary seamen, its crest was crowned with leaping foam that sparkled and glistened in the sunshine for a moment like newly fallen snow, and then disappeared as the huge wave struck the beach a five-foot breaker and broke with a roar of muffled thunder.

"Great Heavens, Tom," said the older man, "that's a tidal wave, or I'm no sailor. Call the rest of the men."

In a moment the entire crew were out on the bluff gazing, some wonderingly, others awestricken, at a second and even mightier wave that rapidly thundered in, covering the Surf-Side shore where it had not been covered for years.

Other waves followed, but each smaller than that preceding it, and soon the sea was once more as smooth as a mill pond.

As the patrolmen trudged back to their breakfast they talked long and wonderingly of the strange sight just observed. Bill Smith, recently returned from years of wandering in the antipodes, declared the phenomenon the result of a "yearthquake." The Keeper, or, as his crew called him, the "Skipper," advanced the somewhat vague theory that "Suthin' had busted out to sea"; and one and all scoffed at the theoretical knowledge which prompted Tom Coffin's remark that "the wave was the forerunner of a big storm."

Half an hour later the crew lounged coatless out of doors, smoking and basking in the sunshine, and chaffing Long Tom good-naturedly about the coming storm.

"Why, the glass been a-risin' all night, Tom. An' jes' look at that sky, will you!" remonstrated the Skipper. "Why, boy, there ain't a cloud in sight!"

The few wisp-like plumes of cottony vapor floating in from the

south hardly warranted a continuation of the argument, and for some time thereafter nothing broke the silence but the occasional snapping of a match and the deep, contented puffing of the sea-dogs as they pulled at their pipes.

In the stillness that followed, most of the group, wearied with the long tramp and broken rest of the night previous, dropped into a gentle doze. Not so, however, with Smith, or, as he was generally called, "Bill B." The Keeper's last remarks had aroused a wild hope within his breast. A long-cherished plan of Smith's had been to spend with his family this, his first Christmas ashore for many years; but by some unforeseen complication at the last minute it had been impossible to get a substitute or obtain "liberty," so Bill B. had resigned himself to a mess dinner at the station, in place of the turkey cooked at home, and a long jaunt on the beach at the very time he had hoped to help his wife fill the children's stockings. But with perfect, calm weather ahead, perhaps, after all, the Keeper might give him the coveted liberty by letting one of the men do double duty, — Long Tom Coffin, the newly initiated "extra," for instance, who, in spite of his disinclination for the games or jests of lighter hours, had proved as loyal and obliging in comradeship, as sure in the performance of his duty, as the oldest surfman at the station.

At gun drill he it was who followed the shot or flaked the line, and he was always first to enter and last to leave the boat room on the rarer occasions when the beautiful craft of the life savers was brought out for a dip. No patrolman ever had to wait over time for Coffin to relieve him, yet many a night that worthy did double duty to give some gay young surfman a chance for a much-needed sleep after a day's revelry on leave. While obliging to a fault, no one ever attempted to impose upon Tom a second time, for although not quite arrived at his majority, he was a broad-shouldered young chap, as tall as a Tuckernucker, and there was that in his clear blue eyes that forbade trifling.

Thus communing with himself, Bill B. glanced furtively, first at the Keeper, who seemed about ready to drop asleep, and then at Tom Coffin, as he sprawled his six feet of manhood along the ground and gazed with unseeing eyes out on the ocean, now ruffled by the first gentle stirring of the morning breeze.

"I say, Skipper," began Bill, tentatively. And, as the eyes of several of the group, the Keeper included, opened lazily and fastened themselves upon him, he floundered on: —

"I say you're sure there's no blow comin' to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? Demmit, man!" replied the Keeper testily, but unsuspectingly, "there won't be no blow fer a month! That is, — er — a, I mean fer a week anyway!

"Not fer a few days anyway," agreed Bill B. hastily. "Well, I were a-thinkin,' that bein' the case, mebbe there'd be a show of my gettin' liberty to-night."

"Who'd take your watch?" sharply queried the Keeper. Then, more kindly, "I'd like mighty well to let you off, Bill, fer I know how you want to be home Christmas. But you see there's no one to walk your beat, unless I do. And the regulations won't permit that!" he wound up, with an attempt at jocularity.

Before poor Smith could voice his acquiescence he felt rather than saw that on Tom Coffin's face the usual look of sadness had given place to one of pity. Nor was he surprised to hear the other say, "I'll take Bill's watch, Skipper, and be glad enough to do him a favor. I was just thinkin'," he added ingenuously as he made a move toward sleeping quarters, "I was just thinkin' how I should hate to be away from my wife and children to-night."

Upon his heels followed the crafty Bill B. who, fearing the Keeper's revoke of his reluctant consent, harnessed his horse and was half way to town before Tom was fairly settled in his bunk.

The sleeping room of the Surf-Side Station was a large, airy chamber that ran the entire length of the building; the substantial iron beds ranged in a row along the carpetless floor were as comfortable as first-class springs, hair mattresses, and scrupulously clean sheets and blankets could make them. When the light-excluding curtains were drawn, Morpheus usually reigned supreme throughout the darkened chamber,— but not this morning. Though he lay with closed eyes, determinedly composed for slumber, he was still awake when, half an hour later, approaching footsteps sounded on the stairway.

"Tom's asleep, I see," remarked one of the crew to the other in a stage whisper, as the entering pair softly hauled off their outer garments preparatory to taking a nap themselves.

"Well, he'll need it all right by this time to-morrow," answered the other in a tone low yet perfectly audible to young Coffin. "Say, Henry, I see by yesterday's paper that the *Yankee Girl* sailed from Boston the day before."

"Is that so! How did Whitty Macy ship? Supercargo or before the mast?"

"I heard tell he tried for second mate; he's got gall enough for anything. But the owners couldn't stand that even if he did buy ten shares in her, so they offered to take him either supercargo or before the mast, and he went as able seaman."

"Able seaman be hanged! I'll bet he pinches the tar out of the ratl'ns fust time he goes aloft. Why, only last summer I took out that bluefishin' party he gave in honor of Long Tom's old sweetheart, and Whitty dun nothin' but make 'slicks' from the time we left the jetties until we got back. What did Patience ever see in him, anyway? Why, Long Tom there is worth a dozen of him. You know they say she's throwed him over for Macy, an' he's come off here to forget her."

"Money! money! And Macy has got it to burn. Oh, Patience is purty as a peach and all that, but girls is all alike, you know. Money'll make most anything go with them. Even a shoal-water craft like Whitty!"

And with a suppressed chuckle the pair relapsed into silence that was broken only by their deep, regular breathing.

But for Tom that whispered conversation had murdered sleep. "Patience!" "Macy!" With those words the whole flimsy air castle of a year and a half ago arose, and was dashed to earth again.

Given a spirited girl pledged by no engagement, a lifelong but jealous, poor lover confronted for the first time by a new, rich lover, and a very small misunderstanding may lead to an early change of partners. Literally it was what Tom considered a dance too much given his rival that drove him to hot-headed reprisals, alienation, and finally a month ago to seeking this situation as surfman, which seemed the only substitute for the seagoing career of his ancestors. For over the islands had stolen, though so gently as hardly to be noticed, a great sea change. The ships that once lined the wharves were now either at the bottom of the sea or dismantled hulks in distant ports; and com-

merce, except that carried on by the line of passenger steamers, had degenerated into the irregular trips of the Boston packet or the even less frequent visits of a grimy collier.

Ship and sweetheart — both seemed to have vanished from the hope of him who had not to be added unto Macy, — Macy, the alien landsman, the lady's man, the spender of fortunes gained by the hard toil of his Nantucket grandsires.

Such was the undercurrent in the life of the new "extra"; and such was the treadmill of memory in which his mind moved to-day, until finally, from sheer exhaustion, he drifted into a deep sleep.

It was about an hour before sunset when Tom awoke. A quick glance at the sky showed that the cottony plumes were floating in from the south more frequently. Still there was nothing threatening in the aspect of the heavens, when the hearty meal finished, Tom and Henry, who formed the dog watch, began to make ready for their patrol of the beach from sunset to eight o'clock; and it was amidst the chaffing of the crew that Tom put on his oilers and drew a battered sou'wester down over his curly pate.

"Long Tom's still a-countin' on that storm of his'n!" remarks one, while "Well, he dassn't bet a dollar it'll rain before morning?" comes tantalizingly from "Haulover" Harry, who has sporty tendencies, and is the first middle watch east.

"I'll just go you on that," replies Tom, promptly placing a coin in the Keeper's hands. And amid cries of "Bluffer! Put up!" "Haulover!" is forced to follow his example.

As the patrolmen step out of doors a most magnificent spectacle silences them. The sun is just sinking with a ruddy glare, in which the waves and objects along the shore stand out with startling distinctness. Then a deep, black cloud, the cloud no bigger than a man's hand, obscures the face of the sinking disk, and as cloud and sun both disappear the crimson tints slowly merge into the deep reds and violets which dye the western heavens long after night has descended over the island. In the dim and prophetic twilight the phenomenon is awe inspiring and portentous of evil to almost all who witness it. Not so to Tom. His active spirit rises with the coming struggle.

When the first dog watch came in at eight o'clock Tom's oil-skins dripped in a miniature flood from the pelting rain outside, the wind, which had been but a breath all day, was coming in puffs that grew stronger with each gust, and the "Old Man," the reef so called which lies off the South Shore, could be heard moaning dismally as the waves dashed across his wicked old breast.

"A bit damp, Skipper!" ejaculated Tom as he emerged, dry and warm, from his dripping outer garments, and grinning a trifle maliciously at the wet and bedraggled Henry, as the latter hung his sweater near the stove to dry.

To the Keeper's anxious acquiescence and offer to turn over the stakes, Tom, *en route* for his bunk, replied with a cheerful "Oh, that's all right. Put that into the mess fund, then all hands will have a whack at him." And when, after what seemed to him only a moment of rest, Coffin was aroused by the Keeper, profuse in apologies for sending him to extra duty, Tom's cheerfulness still persisted.

"You know I always did like a storm," he said, as he stopped in the kitchen to drink a cup of tea, mark the half-inch fall of the barometer, and climb into his rubber suit. A taste which, as the Keeper observed, Tom was likely to get his fill of, with a heavy snow falling, and the station, low, broad, and strong as it was, swaying and rocking with the northeast wind.

Slipping a Coston light into an inside pocket, Tom took up his lantern, and pulling his sou'wester more firmly down over his ears, drew a long breath, opened the storm door, and stepped outside. The instant he cleared the lee of the building the full fury of the tempest broke upon him.

Each frenzied gust swept up tons of sand, which, flying with terrific speed in the gale, cut his face like fine shot from a gun; and so quickly did little hills and valleys appear and disappear among the sand dunes that the whole surface of the upper beach seemed to undulate, slowly, yet, in unison with the wilder heaving of the ocean, keeping time, like the bass notes to the treble, in the grand symphony that the spirit of the storm was playing. From out the black abyss of the deep, colossal breakers rose in swift succession, and dashed, leviathan-like, far up the beach in

one wild agony of spray which was caught up by the gale and mingled with the snow and sand. And above all the wild tumult and turmoil the "Old Man" could be heard roaring like a wild beast at the scent of blood.

Foot by foot Tom fought his way along the shore, backing as he went, perspiring at every pore in spite of the intense cold, compelled every few hundred feet to crouch until he could get his breath. In that flying mass of frozen spray, snow and sand, advance in the ordinary way would have been as impossible as in the face of a gigantic sand blast.

Arriving at last at the post to which was fastened the time key safe, and which marked the end of his beat, some three miles from the station, young Coffin, after several vain attempts, for a fleeting instant obtained a light. The time detector showed a quarter to four. "I'll have just fifteen minutes before beginning the last dog watch," thought Tom grimly as he lay panting for breath.

Now a hurricane of between sixty and eighty miles per hour exerts a pressure of about twenty-five pounds to any square foot of surface opposing it. Long Tom's six feet of manhood represented a surface of twice that number of square feet. In coming east three miles it is therefore evident that he had fought his way against a giant who constantly opposed him with a strength of over three hundred pounds pressure. No wonder, then, that, on the return journey, in spite of the gale, which almost carried him along without effort, he made frequent stops, not only to consume time, — for there was no need of his arriving at the station before sunrise if he was to finish out his watch, — but for rest also.

It had stopped snowing, and he was just debating within himself whether to complete his patrol or to accept the relief that he knew would be offered the instant he arrived at the building, when his weary eyes caught a momentary flicker, like a distant lightning flash, away out on the "Old Man."

His heart seemed to stand still as he listened, and a few seconds later a muffled report was swept to his straining ears by the gale.

Jerking out the Colton light, he struck the plunger a sharp blow, and an instant later a blood-red answering glare lighted up the wild sea about him. As the signal light began to die out Tom ran like a deer for the station.

"Skipper! Men!" he shouted as he burst through the door, "there's a ship on the 'Old Man.'"

"My God! You don't say," roared the Keeper, tumbling out of his room. Four heavy thuds upstairs indicated that as many men had jumped from their bunks to the floor, and a moment later they came pouring down the stairs, dressing as they ran.

"Signal Henry to come in!" yelled the Keeper, as he rang wildly at the telephone to warn the neighboring stations and the cable office in town.

"Say, 'Long' Tom, how'd yer know she's a ship?" queried one of the crew as he fairly jumped into his hip boots.

"Because she's firing a cannon!" shouted Tom from the boat room, where he was looking over the gear, which, however, was ready, as ever, for instant use.

"She's a square rigger, sho' 'nuff, lads. A fore-'n-after don't carry no cannon!" exclaimed the Keeper sagely.

"Hullo! Here's Bill back. Couldn't stay away no longer!" shouted one of the crew as the absentee came through the door.

"He's arter that present the Skipper's got fer him," said another.

"Well, I'm a-thinkin' he'll have to pull fer it," answered the Keeper. "Get inter yer suit, lad! Get inter yer suit!"

With a military swiftness and precision the men rushed through their preparation, obeying the leader's command "Places," just as he caught the flash of another gun.

"Boys! she's off the 'Old Man,' and a-drivin' toward Miacomet Rip!" exclaimed the Keeper. "Mebbe we'll get a chance to use the guns. Better put 'em both on, lads."

It was nearly daybreak before guns and gear had been hauled across the beach to the point whence could be seen the outlines of a noble ship, sharply silhouetted against the brightening sky. The waves that swept over her decks and crashed against her sides, like wild beasts digging at the vitals of their prey, sent the spray flying high into the tops, where the crew could be seen hanging on for their lives.

Though the wreck was beyond the range of the guns, the life savers soon had both of the little brass cannon heavily charged, and elevated as high as possible, in order that the lines might be

shot to their furthest limit. When it grew light enough to see clearly, two shots were fired, one the solid Lisle, and the other the hollow Hunt projectile. As the little messengers of life and mercy sped through the air, dragging the life lines behind them, the prayers of all seemed to urge them on in their flight, and when they fell several hundred yards short of the ship, a groan burst from hundreds of throats. For from all parts of the island had thronged men, women, children, even, drawn thither by the instinct that is in the blood of all seacoast people — until the beach was black with the crowd of spectators.

A second and a third round proved equally futile.

"It's no use, lads," said the Keeper, shaking his head sadly. "We'll have to wait until we can launch the lifeboat. You, Joe, run back to the station and fetch the Code signals and the Shipping List, and then we'll see if we kin spell out her colors."

While the surfman was gone for the book and bunting the low, black clouds that had overhung the heavens suddenly parted, and the patches, flying away as if in a panic, revealed the clear, blue sky. The wind, too, suddenly weakened, dropping to a brisk breeze. And all in less than the twenty minutes it took the fleet-footed Joe to return with the list and flags. During this sudden calm the thunder of the surf sounded all the more terrible, focusing sight and hearing on the huge waves that for a second rose black and threatening, as though about to sweep across the island, carrying everything before them, and then, tripped by the resistless undertow, fell harmless at their feet, a Niagara of spray and foam.

Out on the doomed ship the ensign, union down, flapped dolefully from the mizzen rigging, while from the main rigging streamed a mass of bright bunting, three flags, and a pennant.

"J, H, Q, F," slowly called out Joe, while he squinted through a telescope at the gaily waving colors.

The Keeper's forefinger moved slowly down the column of "J's." Suddenly with a startled look he glanced around and said, "Boys, that ar ship's the *Yankee Girl*, of Boston."

Tom started as though struck by some unseen hand. Turning quickly, he gazed at the black objects clinging to the swaying rigging, while a curious, puzzled look came over his face; only for

a second, however, for the look changed to one of stern determination as he jumped to obey the Keeper's command to the crew to return the guns to the station and bring out the lifeboat.

Slight as the chance seemed of getting even a surf boat out into that high sea, it was the only one, for a deep, portentous roar could be heard, low banks of flying scud began to blot out the blue sky, and it was evident to all that the hurricane was preparing to break with renewed fury.

So while men cheered wildly, and women sobbed and wrung their hands, the patrolmen pushed with a mighty swing the boat down to the water's edge. For an instant crew and volunteers stood anxious, tense, waiting until the Keeper's eager eye caught a break in the procession of breakers.

"Ready!" he cautions.

"Now!" and with a wild rush the crew impel the boat after the receding wave, scrambling in just in time for a powerful shove from the volunteers to carry the craft through the undertow. A second later the oars dipped and flashed, and the boat shot forward to meet the first wave — up, up, till the bow hung almost perpendicular over the stern, and the crew seemed fairly standing on each other's shoulders.

With a gasp of horror many of the spectators closed their eyes.

For an instant the boat toppled with long, white prow high in the air; then a shout of triumph broke from the watchers on the shore as the craft leaped forward over the crest and disappeared into the hollow beyond. When she rose on the crest of the next wave her crew were pulling a strong, steady stroke that slowly but surely carried them to the ship.

Fifteen minutes — half an hour — an hour of dangerous maneuvering dragged away before the lifeboat reappeared, sagging heavily under the human freight that loaded her almost to the gunwales. Laboring, straining, fighting her way through the angry sea that menaced even more at landing than at launching, the craft swung on until within half a dozen breakers of the shore. Then, at the word of command, the weary rowers rested on their oars, waiting anxiously for the word of command from the Keeper, who stood erect and motionless in the stern, by an almost mechanical sweep of the steering oar keeping the boat headed straight, while he

strained eagerly forward, awaiting an opening in that threatening sea.

After what seemed an age to those on shore — it must have been an eternity to those in the boat — the lifeboat darted forward.

Like a race-horse she came, in sight all the time, for she was riding just back of the crest of a giant comber before whose advance the waves in front seemed to make way and vanish.

With a crash and roar the huge billow dashed far up the beach.

When it receded the lifeboat, with all its precious freight, was seen high and dry on the shore, while in the wake of that on which the lifeboat had ridden followed a second wave, whose surf would carry the boat still higher up the beach, a fact the life savers well knew, and so sat perfectly still bracing themselves with the oars.

Not so with one of the passengers, however; for before those on shore could shout a warning, or a restraining hand could be extended from the boat, a young man, mad with fear from his awful night's adventure, seeing nothing, knowing nothing, but that the kelp-strewn sands beside him led up to the safe, dry land above, leaped over the boat's side. A second later the lifeboat shot forward on the incoming surf, and left him struggling in the deadly undertow.

Then quick as a thought a form, clad in the suit of the life savers, jumps past the helmsman and dives over the stern.

"Throw him a line!" roars the Keeper, as all hands leap from the boat now far above the breaker's reach.

Hardly has he spoken when a rope thrown from the shore goes whirling through the air and falls over the heads of the two men struggling out in the surf, one of whom is seen to tread water while he passes the line under his arms. And then the sea, raging at being cheated of its prey, swallows them both.

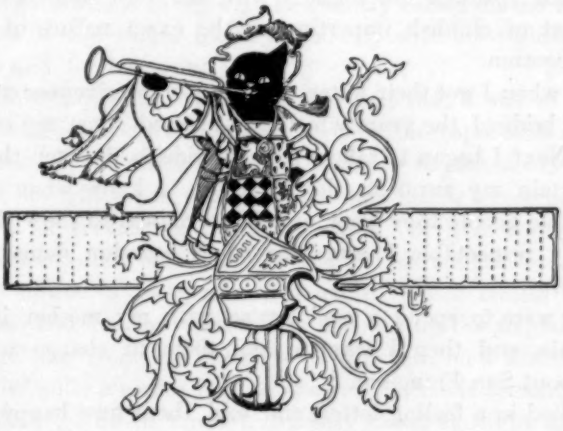
But scores of sinewy hands have a hold on the line, and hauling it swiftly in, snatch its precious freight from out the watery jaws of death. And when the dripping, unconscious form of 'Long' Tom Coffin lies upon the beach, there, clasped in his arms, so tightly that with difficulty they loosen his grasp, is the half-drowned body of Whittier Macy.

As two groups of men start for the building, gently yet swiftly carrying their human burdens, a young girl breaks away from the

hands that would restrain her, and follows the solemn procession as one who belongs therein by sacred right.

It is Patience!

But it is not Macy upon whom the girl's anxious eyes are riveted, nor is it Macy to whose deaf ears are directed those sobbing protestations of a love concealed all these months under a veil of cruel misunderstanding. For when Tom Coffin's eyes opened from his first peaceful sleep after days of delirium, they rested, first on the loved face of his mother, and then, close beside it, on that of Patience, her eyes bright with happy auguries.



My Awful Aunts.

BY SAM DAVIS.

A FEW weeks before the meeting of the Christian Endeavor Society in San Francisco last fall I was honored with an invitation from two maiden aunts, residing in Hartfort, Conn., to act as their chaperon in San Francisco during the convention.

It had been many years since I had met my aunts in the land of steady habits, and my recollections of them were based mainly upon the occasion of my visit to their home when a boy. I could not recall either of them with a kindly feeling, as they had made me attend church when I was in no mood for religion, and the eldest had spanked me soundly with her formidable slipper for some sort of childish impertinence the exact nature of which I have forgotten.

Still, when I got their letter, a feeling of forgiveness came over me and bridged the years which had elapsed since my childhood days. Next I began to take a sort of pride in the fact that I was to entertain my aunts in the big city. I knew what intensely respectable people they were, and I determined to show them how intensely respectable I could be when occasion demanded the sacrifice.

They were to spend a week or so with my mother in Lower California, and then I was to take them in charge and guide them about San Francisco.

I replied in a feeling letter, and told them how happy I would be to attend such a notable gathering in their company, and soon began to experience a lively anticipation of pleasure as I contemplated the event.

But this feeling of pleasure presently gave way to a sense of the enormous responsibility I was about to undertake.

I had begun life with considerable Christianity in my vicinity,

my father having been a Congregational clergyman of the most orthodox sort, and a man whose daily walk in life, I feel proud to say, stood above reproach, — in distinct and monumental variance to my own, which at times showed a sad forgetfulness of the early teachings of my religious sire.

I was trained at a church school, and had studied for the ministry, but the college authorities had not held out much hope to my father that I would shine as a teacher of the Gospel, and so I had drifted by slow stages into journalism.

I had spent six or seven years in San Francisco as a reporter on the daily papers, and this occupation had brought me in contact with a most varied class of associates. I was quite intimate with the leading clergymen of the city, and I had frequently taken lunch with the Episcopal bishop at his residence. I was on the best of terms with the Salvation Army people, and I recall with pride that I was once invited by them to make a talk at the Rescue Home. The Sisters of Charity always had a pleasant smile for me on the street, and the ladies of the leading temperance organizations of the city frequently called on me to smite the cohorts of the liquor traffic in the city with my righteous indignation and fearless pen.

I cite these things as evidence of the fact that I was on a level with the better element and in touch with ultra-respectable society.

Of course, on the other hand, the exacting requirements of my profession brought me in contact with some rather queer people.

My term of service on the "late watch" of a morning paper had given me quite a choice list of criminal acquaintances. I had once interviewed a pickpocket known in police circles as the Wharf Rat, and he had insisted in keeping up the acquaintance after his release from the clutches of the law, on a technicality. I found him quite a useful man to know, for when it became necessary for me to go down through Barbary Coast at night after an item, I could thread the mazes of vice and crime with impunity when piloted by the pickpocket. Often, when in the midst of the worst band of thieves and cut-throats in the city, a signal from my companion of the deft fingers would render my life and pocketbook as safe as if I were in the Chamber of Commerce reporting one of its sessions.

I learned to acquire quite a liking for this strange character, and I also noted the fact that, whenever I loaned him money, he invariably returned it on the day and date specified, although I often felt pretty certain that he had to explore some one else's pocket beside his own to meet the maturity of the obligation.

On one occasion he told me that he had been compelled to relieve one of my reportorial associates of ten dollars in order to pay me what he had borrowed the day before, and when he mentioned the name of his victim I did not counsel him to return it, for the man whose pocket he had picked had owed me that amount for nearly a year.

When I told him this, he replied with perfect seriousness: —

"Give me a list of the people who owe you money, and I will see that you get every cent of it."

Then, again, I feel bound to admit that the pickpocket was by no means the worst of my acquaintances. I knew all the pugilists in the city, the cock and dog fighters, the ward heelers, ballot-box stuffers, grafters, and the miscellaneous rag-tag and bobtail following of rascals who hang on the ragged edge of politics in San Francisco.

I did not associate with these men from choice, but was continuously thrown in their way by the city editor of the journal on which I was employed as an all-around reporter. He always insisted that I had the qualities that made me congenial to the toughs, and could get more out of them than any other man on the staff.

With the theatrical profession I was also on a familiar footing, was always welcome behind the scenes, and seldom overlooked in those after-theater suppers which sometimes follow a successful initial performance. In short, I had, to the best of my ability, lived up to one precept inculcated by my Biblical training — that of being all things to all men.

Such was the Jekyll and Hyde character who was to guide two unworldly dames through the mazes of their first sojourn in the metropolis of the Pacific coast.

They arrived late Saturday afternoon, and I met them at the Oakland Ferry, and conducted them to the Occidental Hotel, where I had already secured apartments. I chose this particular

caravansery because it was noted for the quiet and retired character of its guests. The Episcopal bishop of California roomed there, and the place was assiduously avoided by the turf element, the Rainey "push," and the deleterious crowd of shady politicians who trained with Buckley's "lambs." When, therefore, my aunts and I occupied adjoining rooms at the Occidental, I felt a just pride in their moral surroundings as well as my own.

As good luck would have it, no sooner were we seated in the dining room for our first meal, than there appeared on the scene the Reverend Doctor Caulding, who had been my tutor at college. He was now the honored rector of St. Stephen's Church, and was accompanied by the bishop of the diocese. They greeted me warmly, for the clergy are not indifferent to a good notice in a secular paper, and needed no urging to join us at dinner, and afterwards to adjourn with us to my aunts' parlor, where we spent an evening in profitable discourse. Meantime, convinced that this was only the forerunner of events equally felicitous, I had found time to indite a note to my friend Billy Blinn, who, like myself, walked with the godly for the sake of public show, but who, also like myself, was a sad moral hypocrite, and fonder of the world, the flesh, and the devil than the straight path of rectitude. This note which I dispatched that evening by special messenger read as follows: —

Dear Billy: — I have to ask you a special favor. I have at present two aunts in this city who are domiciled with me at the Occidental. They hail from Hartford, Conn., and come of strict Puritan stock. Now, I know that you have a pew in the First Congregational Church, and as your wife — the only member of your family who ever occupies it — is away, I want the loan of it for next Sunday, so that I can take my aunts to church, and give them the sweet impression that I am a regular attendant. You see the point? I enclose my card, and wish that you would kindly fasten it near the hymn-book rack in such a way as to indicate that the pew is my own.

Carry out the scheme in good shape, and I will do as much for you some day when you get in another tight hole and need my services. I know where the pew is, as your wife lugged me in there one morning, about a year ago, when she caught me on the way to Harbor View to a Sunday clambake. Then I thought I should never get over the agony of those two hours, but now I bless your wife for having diverted my irreverent steps. Now don't fail me.

Yours as ever,

CHARLIE.

On the following morning I informed my aunts that, knowing

their religious convictions, I had planned that we should attend the service at the First Congregational Church, and when they began making arrangements for an early start, I told them carelessly that they need not hurry, as I had a pew there which I maintained the year around.

The look of pleasure that beamed from their faces at this statement was enough to quiet any qualms of conscience.

The service had just begun when we walked majestically up the aisle, headed by the sexton — whose palm I had quietly crossed with a dollar — and, amid the soft strains of the most entrancing devotional music I had ever heard, we floated into the pew.

As we entered I peered anxiously to see whether Billy had followed out my instruction. A casual glance showed me that he had, and I breathed an inward hallelujah. But no sooner had I seated myself at the head of the pew, with the air of a confirmed church-goer, than a nearer view of the card sent a warm and cold wave of perspiration breaking over me alternately. I was even seized with a vain desire to tear that fatal piece of pasteboard from its place before my aunts should have finished their devotions. Billy, always an incorrigible joker, had planned this affair with diabolical ingenuity. He had figured that I would send my aunts into the pew ahead; and to the right of the hymn-book rack, beyond my reach, just where it would meet the eyes of my two relatives, he had fastened securely with small brass-headed tacks a card that bore in neatly executed lettering the following inscription: —

ROBERT FITZSIMMONS,
CHAMPION OF THE WORLD.

CHARLES JOHNSON.

Well, the music rose and swelled, the congregation prayed and sang by turns, the preacher exhorted the worshipers; and my aunts rose, and sat, and sang, just as decorously as though every movement didn't give them a new view of that awful combina-

tion of the name of their sister's son with that of the champion pugilist of the world. But their furtive but meaning glances toward that fateful card, and their far-away air of shocked propriety were worse than reproaches. I even longed to have them call me names or in some way break the ice of their dignity. But throughout the service they never deigned to look at me except when Aunt Fannie inquired in a freezing tone whether the other lessee of the pew would arrive, — a question which the opportune giving out of a hymn saved me from answering.

Nor did they cease to hold themselves with the mutely reproachful aloofness of two Christian martyrs when, the service ended, we joined the procession in the aisle. With that dignified but independent gait that marks the New England spinster, they made their way to the door, never once casting a glance at their relative, who loitered in the rear like a guilty schoolboy.

That was why, when at the door a counter current met us, my revered relatives were carried on into the street, and I was left stranded on the stone steps. That was why, also, from my point of vantage I saw a curiously familiar figure apparently fall against my eldest aunt, and recover himself only by seizing the skirt of her coat. It was the Wharf Rat, and in his maneuver he had adroitly picked my Aunt Fannie's pocket!

At the risk of crippling various citizens for life, I managed to push through the crowd and, stretching over, to touch the Rat on the shoulder just as he was about to effect a retreat. He turned, with the look a hare might have cast on a hound; but as he saw me his face underwent a kinetescopelike series of changes, ranging from surprised recognition to knowing acquiescence as I signified by a meaning look that the ladies were with me.

In a second he had placed the purse in my side coat pocket, and was sliding out of the crowd — as I hoped, unobserved. But some fearful intuition sent my aunt's hand into her pocket just as the Rat and I parted company, and she turned exactly in time to find me exchanging impressive farewells with a gentleman of unprepossessing, not to say suspicious personality.

Whether she connected the disappearance of her purse with the appearance of one whom I then and there eulogized as a pillar of

the Congregational Church, and a teacher in its Sunday school, I did not attempt to decide. I simply took it as a matter of course that the purse had been left in the church, and after absenting myself for a proper period of time in that ill-fated edifice, returned waving the lost article with an air of well-simulated triumph.

But if my respected relatives dragged "Charlie's strange friend" into the conversation once during the afternoon they did a dozen times. When finally they took up my other friend, the champion of the world, it was a positive relief. After we had attended church again in the evening, — at St. Stephen's this time, in order, as I explained, to give my aunts a broad and liberal view of the San Francisco clergy, — I pleaded a headache — and had it, too — and went to bed early, assuring them that we would devote the next day to sight-seeing. It was in vain that they remonstrated that I was a busy man, that they must not intrude on my time.

In a devoted squiring about town I saw my chance to reconstruct my crumbling reputation, and I insisted that my time was their time while they stayed.

But once more I had reckoned without the unforeseen; for at the breakfast table the next morning I received a telegram that left me no choice but to take the 9 o'clock train to a place seventy miles inland. "On a matter of life and death," the message read, and as the name signed was that of an old friend and host, there was nothing for me to do but to break the matter to my relatives. Break, though, is hardly the term to describe the conveying of information that my aunts received with that lofty self-containedness as characteristic of the New England spinster as it is of the caste of Vere de Vere. They repeated that they hadn't expected to intrude on my time, insisted that it was the mission of Christian Endeavorers to carve out their own paths, asked me scornfully if I supposed they'd lived in the land of superfluous women all their days to need an escort now. Finally they produced in triumph a map of San Francisco, with the places of interest all neatly picked with colored ink — which they'd prepared before they left the East. By means of this document I laid out a route for them to the Cliff House, advised them to spend the day there sniffing the breezes of the Pacific, and departed, promising to meet them at the hotel that evening. As a parting joke I suggested that if

any of my friends arrived in my absence they might do the honors.

It took me over two hours to reach, via a branch road, the rural station that is the jumping-off place for my friend's ranch. It took an hour more, after I'd satisfied myself that no carriage was coming to meet me, to plod three uphill miles to Skyland Ranch, there to be greeted with the paralyzing news that my friend was in San Francisco, and hadn't been heard of for a fortnight.

But it took only a few minutes of hard thinking after my arrival to come to the decision that there was a game in progress, and that I was It.

As to the afternoon that I spent at Skyland Ranch — there was no train back until 6.30 o'clock — I needn't dwell upon that. In times past I had enjoyed some of the happiest hours of my life fishing and hunting in that very place; but then I was not at the wrong end of the fish-line.

It is enough to say that it was half past 8 that night when I walked into the hotel and humbly asked the clerk for my key. He gave it to me with some news.

"Your aunts made a short stay, didn't they?" he inquired casually. "I see they went off on the 6.30 train.

"Say, they had lots of callers while you were away."

I didn't stop to hear anything more, but rushed up to the apartments that had lately sheltered my respected relatives. As the clerk had said, they were gone, but on the center table, placed where it would attract my attention, was a note in which they expressed regret at their sudden departure, and stated that they would write from Los Angeles. As I laid the letter wearily back on the table another document caught my eye. It was written in a familiar handwriting on a sheet of hotel paper, and read as follows: —

THE DAY'S DOINGS OF CHARLES JOHNSON'S AUNTS.

9.30 A. M. Curtain rises with preparation of aunts to depart on their expedition.

9.55 A. M. Appearance of bell boy, bringing cards of Misses Kitty Clyde and Annie Murphy to see Mr. Johnson.

10–10.30 A. M. Reception of the Misses Clyde and Murphy in their gayest war paint and feathers, and presenting as introduction this advertisement in the morning *Press*.

> WANTED. CHORUS GIRLS. — Fifty good-looking chorus girls desiring positions may hear of same by applying in person to-day, between 10 A. M. and 5 P. M., to Charles Johnson, Occidental Hotel.

10.30–11 A. M. Spent in silent meditation.

11 A. M. Aunts send bell boy for time-tables of street-car routes.

11.10 A. M. Aunts receive call from Mr. Timothy O'Brien, dog fancier, who carries a large market basket containing a bull pup which he says he has brought in response to a letter from Mr. Johnson.

11.35 A. M. More chorus girls. Not received.

11.40 A. M. Aunts send downstairs for two cups of malted milk.

11.50 A. M. Aunts are seen in street attire about to emerge from their room, but are met at the door by a boy with message marked urgent. As the envelope is unsealed they read the enclosure, which invites "Charlie" to witness a little sparring match at Point Lobos that afternoon, and are seen to retire to their room, dismissing boy with verbal answer that Mr. Johnson is out of town for the day.

12 M. A large, new consignment of chorus girls send up their cards, but are not received.

12–12.15 P. M. Aunts not heard from.

12.15–1.15 P. M. Aunts lunch in their room.

1.15 P. M. More chorus girls. Not admitted.

1.30 P. M. Aunts once more come from room in street dress, but this time are stopped at the elevator by a mysterious person in loud checks, who wishes to see Mr. Johnson at once on very important private business. On being escorted to Mr. Johnson's apartment, he represents himself as a turfman, who in return for past favors is going to give his friend Charlie a tip on a coming event.

2 P. M. Chorus girls. Turned down.

2.15–2.45 P. M. Aunts again detained — by a mysterious Chinaman, come to bring back Mr. Johnson's opium pipe.

2.45 P. M. Aunts send for a pot of tea.

3–4 P. M. Aunts, once more sallying out for their expedition, receive call from a person of Semitic feature, who produces a promissory note, signed Charles Johnson, which he insists must be settled before sundown. Finally he departs, muttering that he will not be put off by Charlie's women folks.

4.15 P. M. Aunts ring for hotel clerk, and interview him concerning trains to Los Angeles.

4.30 P. M. Peter Haley, the star Irish comedian, calls for Mr. Johnson, and being received by aunts, leaves pass to private box at the Gaiety Comique for "Charlie and his lady friends."

5 P. M. Aunts order cab for 6.30 train to Los Angeles.

5–5.45 P. M. Packing and writing note.

5.45–6 P. M. Lunch in room.

6 P. M. Aunts walk majestically from hotel to cab. As they are starting the hook-nosed person reappears and, running along on the curbstone, shouts

that Charlie's friends must pay up on the due bill if they wish to keep Charlie out of the cooler.

Curtain to slow music.

As I laid down this diabolical document, what sounded like a suppressed chuckle drew my attention to the doorway. Standing there in an attitude of brazon effrontery, his head cocked saucily on one side, his thumbs stuck into the armholes of his vest, stood Billy Blinn.

"Yes," he returned, to my accusing glance, "I did it. Sent the telegram, made out the program, engaged the performers. Thought you'd like a day off from entertaining your aunts, and I knew I could furnish them with a little excitement and put them dead on to some of the ways of their nephew. But to see that no harm came to the wanderers from home, I hired the room opposite and, leaving the door ajar, saw to it that everything went off as per schedule."

Now it has always been my boast not only that I could appreciate a practical joke, but that I could pay one off every time; but as I stood there helpless, utterly confounded, all desire or hope to get even was crushed out of me. I felt as though I was an irretrievable outcast from home and family forever, — that the wires were down between me and all my kin.

I still felt that way when, twenty-four hours later, I recognized my Aunt Fannie's handwriting on an envelope postmarked Los Angeles.

And this is what I read: —

Dear Nephew: — You will pardon us for leaving so unceremoniously, but circumstances over which we had no control seemed to point to our immediate departure. We have told your mother, who is daily growing more feeble, that we left because we were unaccustomed to the foggy weather, and because we preferred her company to the excitement of a great city. We also explained to her that you have remained on account of a pressing engagement with Bishop Williams to visit him for a week, and write up the Christian Endeavor Conference, under his special instructions.

Trusting that our hasty departure will not be misconstrued as a lack of appreciation of your hospitality, and with thanks for all your attentions, we remain

Your affectionate aunts,

FANNIE AND ELLEN.

As I finished this letter, I am not ashamed to confess that I pressed it to my lips, reflecting remorsefully on the sweet kindliness

with which those dear creatures, once the terror of my boyhood days, had overlooked all of my seeming irregularities, and at home had covered the knots and cracks in my character with the veneering of charity, in order to give my aged mother an additional good opinion of her son.

With a pang of contrition, I remembered how for years I had referred to them as "my awful aunts." Now they appeared in a new and glorified light, crowning their enforced flight from the city with full forgiveness, and casting the warm mantle of charity over all my moral delinquencies.

It is needless to say that, in the light of this revelation, I at once sat down and wrote them a letter, in which I assured them that they were "perfect bricks," and all the term implied.

To further show that I appreciate their good offices in my behalf, I have turned over a new leaf, — to the sorrow of the city editor, who remarks that I am fast losing my prestige with the tough element in the city.

The Scent of Jasmine.

BY LIVINGSTONE B. MORSE.

HAT odors and music possess, of all appeals to the senses, the greatest power of evoking the past is, I believe, conceded by both poets and physiologists. It is in explaining this fact that the split comes; the poet — and indeed many every-day people — declaring that because they are the least material in their effect, fragrance and melody are most potent over things of the spirit; the physiologist contending that they simply have peculiar power to excite the brain to reproduce former processes.

Up to a certain point either theory seems plausible. That there is a point beyond, where the ways fork, I think the following narrative sufficient testimony.

Some years ago I spent a summer in a border castle. Not the border made famous by Scott, but the lesser known, though today even more romantic boundary between France and Spain, the one-time haunt of the troubadours, where modernity and the middle ages meet.

Of this strange mixture of old and new, of French and Spanish, of the real and the legendary, the *Chateau de l'Astiya*, — literally the Castle of the Witch, — at which I was a visitor, was uniquely typical. In architecture a medley of Gothic, Moorish, and seventeenth century French, the dark chateau, perched on a jutting crag high over the brawling Tech, looked forbidding as any ancient fortress. But a modern rug covered the stone flagging of the dark entrance hall; the sparkle of glass, and silver, and Dresden china added an anachronism to the monster dining table in the tapestry-hung banquet hall; and the latest magazines and art studies brought a note of Paris, and London, and Vienna into those dim, awesome rooms.

Only in the library — in former centuries the house chapel with

its resident priest — the spirit of the past was left undisturbed. Here oaken paneling, and groined Gothic arches, and curiously leaded windows had been changed in no whit from the days when they lent solemnity to the vigils of new-made knights or the hurried mass heard before battle by armored men. From its early estate the room was changed only in one particular. In the niche where once had risen the shining altar was built a grand organ, so close to the southern window that while fingering the keys I could look down the sheer cliff to the Tech, murmuring hoarsely in the depths below, above which the vapor wreaths floated in fantastic shapes. I could even inhale the perfume of the vine that clung about the window — a jasmine vine thick with the starry white blossoms that, above all others, are redolent of romance. And day by day, as I played or dreamed on the organ bench, there seemed to grow up a subtle affinity between my moods and the place, and the sounds, and the odor of jasmine; so that gradually the every-day world of the nineteenth century seemed to recede farther and farther into dreamland, and the world of long ago, mirrored in the ancient chronicles with which the room was lined, to become more and more a potent and living actuality.

It was in this room and beside this window that I first read the legend of Isabella *l'Astiya*, — Isabella the Witch, — from whom the castle gained its name.

Isabella of Roussilon was the only child of Gerard II., and so renowned through the Province for her beauty and goodness that, in accordance with her father's dearest wish and hope, she was sought in marriage by the King of Aragon. This, too, although the Counts of Roussilon belonged to the unpopular sect of the Albigenses. An unforeseen obstacle, however, was the opposition of Isabella herself. Hitherto always obedient and dutiful, neither by threats, nor urging, nor even appeal to her religious training could she be persuaded to the alliance. Indeed, she seemed encouraged in her resolve by certain pious pilgrimages that she made from time to time, attended only by her old nurse, to some distant shrine whereof the count did not know or ask the location. She would be gone some days, and at length her father noticed that upon her return she would seem more gentle and pensive than ever, but still more firmly unyielding; and little

by little he began to distrust the effects of these pilgrimages, and at last forbade them entirely. Perhaps he enforced his authority by bolts and bars. At any rate, from that day Isabella kept to the castle, making no complaint, but so evidently sickening under the restraint that at last her father was constrained to grant his consent to one final pilgrimage.

With great joy and unusual splendor of preparation she set out, attended as before by her nurse. And that was the last ever seen of the beautiful Isabella. It was not till years had gone by that the old nurse, crippled by age and infirmity, crawled back to the castle and told her story, on hearing which the old count died of grief and shame.

It seems that years before Raymond, Count of Toulouse (afterward the famous Raymond VI.), while traveling through the Province of Roussilon had stopped at the court of Gerard, and seeing Isabella, had loved her and been loved by her. Knowing that Gerard would never consent to the union, Raymond had won her to a secret marriage, and had deceived her with a mock priest.

Raymond returned almost immediately to Toulouse; but they arranged to meet from time to time at his castle in the Pyrenees, upon whose ruins the *Chateau de l'Astiya* was afterwards built, and this was the secret shrine of Isabella's pilgrimages.

Time passed; again and again Isabella urged Raymond to acknowledge the marriage, but he always put her off with some good excuse. The clamor against the Albigenses was increasing. Already, by refusing to take an active part in the persecution, because of his love for Isabella, he had incurred the censure of the church, and at last was obliged to flee to hiding in his castle among the Pyrenees. It was then that he found Isabella, triumphant in having compassed her escape; and maddened, perhaps, at the sacrifices he had made for her, he confessed his deceit. What more passed between them is unknown, but only the next day Raymond was stricken down by an unknown illness which baffled the skill of all the physicians. Through this Isabella nursed him devotedly, but apparently without hope.

He seemed on the point of death, when one day the seneschal of the castle, a Basque whose tribe were famous for their arts of healing, proposed a sure cure for the count — namely, the left

hand of a child cut off during sleep, and wrapped about with its own hair as a powerful amulet. This barbarous plan was about to be carried out when Isabella, shocked at the atrocity, interposed and saved the child, at the same time indignantly ordering the Basque to leave the castle. He did as she commanded, but swore to be revenged for the loss of his position. Collecting a number of the count's credulous retainers in a valley near by, he performed certain mystical rites, announcing finally to the awe-struck beholders that he had discovered the illness of the count to be due to witchcraft, and proclaimed that the sorceress, or *Astiya*, as it is in the Basque tongue, who had wrought the spell, was no other than Isabella herself.

Isabella had many enemies who were jealous of her influence, and the news speedily came to the ears of the count. Now whether he believed that Isabella had really cast this spell in revenge for the shame he had brought upon her, or whether, having grown weary of her, he made this an excuse for ridding himself of one whose gentle presence must have been a constant reproach to him, the nurse did not know; but at all events, at the dead of night, while Isabella watched at the bedside of her betrayer, two men stole into the room, and bearing the unfortunate girl to the crags without the castle, they hurled her slight form into the darkness of the gorge. One wild grasp she made in falling, and caught at a vine of flowering jasmine that grew upon the edge of the cliff. Its white star blossoms fell all about her in a shower as she fell down into the rushing Tech, and thus, it is said, she strewed her grave with flowers.

The mountaineers, however, affirm that she still haunts the spot where she loved and died. They believe her to have been a witch, indeed, and point to the wreath of mist that rises at night and floats above the stream, saying that it is the spirit of the *Astiya*, who is forced thus to return as an expiation for her crime.

This legend took a powerful hold upon me. Often, as I reclined beside the window in the library, idly watching the stirring jasmine leaves against the sky, I fell to thinking of the legend, and wondered whether it were possible that, in a spirit of revenge, she could have brought herself to enter into a compact with the powers of Evil; or whether, in perfect innocence, she had been

cruelly put to death. Had her love for her false husband survived her knowledge of his deceit? Had she forgiven him? Thoughts of her drifted through my mind so often as I chanced to be in the library; at first vaguely and fitfully, but with ever-increasing distinctness and power, that was specially marked when of a night — the brilliant moonlight night of Southern France — I would sit at the organ in the dusk and play dreamily to myself, softly running from theme to theme as the mood seized me, and letting my thoughts have free rein.

One evening I had been playing as usual, gliding carelessly from one composition to another, — now the full-toned Largo of Handel, now a weird rhapsody of Liszt, when, close beside me, I heard, or thought I heard, a sigh. It might have been the wind, or perhaps it was my fancy; yet so distinct it was, so inexpressibly sad, that I could not shake off the impression of its reality. Only one faint sigh, yet I could not forget it.

A few evenings later I was playing something of St. Saëns; I remember perfectly it was a study in which there occurs a partial ascending scale of E flat. As I reached this passage, and my fingers swept up the scale, I heard close at hand and perfectly distinct, the soft sweeping of light drapery, as though a piece of silk were dragged over the floor, and again the gentle sigh.

I stopped short in my playing and turned about. The moon poured in a flood of light, the air was heavy with the jasmine scent, and, though I could see nothing, I was conscious of some one standing near me. By a sudden impulse I turned back to the organ, and repeated the measure I had just played — E, F, A flat, G, in the scale of E flat, straining my ears meanwhile to their fullest. Again upon the floor I heard the soft sweeping of the silken garment, and the low uttered sigh, continuing while I held the notes. There could be no doubt of it this time — this was no trick of imagination!

Here at least was a discovery. There was undoubtedly a connection between the sounds evoked by my playing and the manifestation of the unseen presence. But what was it? Without having any definite theory to work upon I set myself to discover. I ransacked the library for works on acoustics, and the various properties of sound. I tried all manner of experiments in syn-

chronous vibrations: on plates of glass, on water, and on stretched chords, and these I sought to apply in some way in explanation of the phenomena; but with no success. I felt certain, however, that something was to be revealed to me, something outside the pale of probability; and with interest aroused to the highest pitch, I determined to wait.

I gradually worked out for myself a set of facts or principles in relation to the phenomena. The light must be of a certain brilliancy, the atmosphere perfectly clear; there must be a light breeze from such a quarter that the scent of the jasmines should be wafted directly into the room. Given these conditions, and my mind in a receptive state, I observed that when certain notes were struck upon the organ there would occur the sighs, the sound of sweeping drapery, and I would be conscious of a near-by presence. At such times my faculties were wrought to a high pitch of excitement; the room seemed charged with electricity.

Night after night I sat at the organ waiting for some further revelation. As the moon drew toward the full, and the jasmine vine put forth its most abundant bloom so that the air was very heavy with the scent, I observed that the manifestations became more and more frequent. On two or three occasions I even fancied that a shadowy form hovered for a single instant in the moonlight near the window. Or was it only the mist floating up from the stream below wrought by my excited fancy into the semblance of a figure? It was there but an instant, then gone; and try as I would, by playing the same strain over and over, I could not recall it. The moon was on the wane, and the jasmine was beginning to fade, — half of the blossoms were gone already. I was conscious, I know not why, that it would soon be too late. The sadness was growing upon me. Once in the midst of a nocturne of Chopin's I heard a low wail at my side — so pitiful that the tears started to my eyes. What was this awful sorrow, so near, yet so entirely beyond the reach of my help?

One night, near the end of June, I sat leaning far out of the Gothic window, gazing down into the cavern below; inky black, save where the vapor that rose above the stream floated in white fantastic shapes that drifted, and wreathed, and changed and vanished — slowly — endlessly. The moonlight fell broadly in a

great shaft of light upon the floor of the library. With every puff of the soft air the heavy scent of the jasmines was wafted into the room.

Suddenly the breeze freshened, chilly; at that instant came to me, like a command, an irresistible impulse to play. I rushed to the organ and, throwing wide the stops, began without hesitation the grand Fifth Symphony of Beethoven.

I played as one inspired. Swept on by the current of my mood, I thought of nothing but the perfect harmony in nature, in the music, and in myself.

I finished the andante, and reached those wonderful transition chords that precede the repetition of the theme. As I struck the chords, something akin to paralysis held my fingers. At the same moment I beheld, poised in the great flood of moonlight that poured into the room, shadowy, yet perfectly clear in outline, the figure of a woman. The face was marvelously beautiful, the hands stretched out as though in supplication, the hair flowing, the drapery a cloud of silver mist.

While I looked, faintly, as from afar off, borne to my ears upon the heavy jasmine-scented air, came these words: "Raymond, *toi que j'aime*, Raymond!" the voice, low and tender, though heartbreaking in its sadness, dying in a faint sigh: "Raymond, thou whom I love, Raymond!"

That was all — just while I held the chords; then it melted away into the moonlight, as the mist below on the river fades and vanishes.

I sprang up and leaned far out of the window. There was no one to be seen. The jasmine vine was quite bare of blossoms, the breeze had swept off the last of them, and like a shower of white stars they were gently floating down into the misty chasm below. The presence, whatever it was, had disappeared; and though many times since I have touched the same chords at night by moonlight, it has never shown itself to me again.

But I believe — whatever the physiologists may say — that it was because place, and hour, and mood, and music all combined to put me for a single instant in harmony with the unseen world that I was permitted to see the spirit of poor "*l'Astiya*"; and that at last, after centuries of silence, she had been permitted to assert her innocence.

The Iron Star.

BY FRANK L. POLLOCK.

TRUE STORY

WHAT puzzled the King of Servia and all the royal household was how the loss of the Iron Star became so quickly known. Known it was, as the roaring mobs in the streets of Belgrade and before the palace testified. In fact, excitement ran so high that at one time it seemed probable that the reigning dynasty would be overturned, an event which would have muddled the affairs of Eastern Europe beyond comprehension, and probably opened a way for the Great War.

All have heard of the famous Iron Star of Servia; most have met some rumor of its strange adventures; some may have seen it among the Crown jewels, previous to its disappearance; but few know the secret history of its romantic connection with Count Gorgei and the Princess. As much of the story as could be gathered I have here set down, and I have taken the sole precaution — two royal families being concerned — to alter certain names; but for those who have read the newspapers of that year this disguise will be easily pierced.

The Iron Star itself was a rude, six-pointed star of black iron, smooth with age, set with jewels, and said to contain iron from one of the nails used in the Crucifixion. For nearly eight hundred years it has been deemed indispensable in the marriages of members of the royal family, the bride and groom laying hands on the Star during the ceremony. In fact, without this rite the sacrament would scarce be considered valid. A host of superstitions center round the relic, and by the simple peasantry it is — or, at least, was — revered as the very amulet, the palladium of the kingdom.

There was to be use for the Star in the early eighties. The Princess Aline was to marry Prince Anton, of Bulgaria. The Prince had come to Belgrade, the streets, palaces, and cathedral

were decorated, and all was arranged, when, only thirty hours before the time appointed for the ceremony, the Iron Star was sought and reported missing. Everything was cut short. The wedding was postponed. The bridegroom was in despair. The King was in a fury, and threatened death if the news was allowed to pass beyond the palace gates.

A vigorous search was at once instituted, and every one about the palace had to submit to a personal examination. The government detectives were notified, and Count Gorgei, a cousin of the Princess, offered to run down to Salonika and keep an eye on the seaport. This was considered very magnanimous of him, for there were stories of a romantic attachment between the cousins, and it was certain that the Count had violently opposed the marriage, which was purely one of statecraft.

But to the dismay of the palace, the people seemed to learn of the affair with infernal rapidity. The Star was missed in the morning, and at noon the word was in everybody's mouth. The Bulgarian marriage had never been over-popular in the capital, and this disaster seemed to the Belgradians to stamp it as ill-omened and accursed. To have attempted to carry through the marriage without the Star would have been to provoke a revolution. Later in the day a rumor spread, flying with incredible rapidity, that it was proposed to forge an imitation star, and this was sufficient to raise the excitable Servians into howling mobs that packed the streets and clamored at the palace gates.

Curiously enough, no one seemed to think of connecting the Princess Aline with this series of inexplicable events, though her personal distaste to the marriage was not unknown. Yet it was observed by her domestics that she betrayed no alarm at the commotion that seethed through the city, nor did she seem surprised that the citizens should appear as well informed on the case as herself. It might have been noticed, also, that Count Gorgei presently ceased to report by wire from Salonika, and leaving his hotel, sailed away over the Ægean in a new steam yacht that had been lying in the harbor for ten days.

The wretched King of Servia was in a quandary. The mind of his people had made a dead set against the marriage. The Prince of Bulgaria was inclined to suspect him of bad faith, and

began to assume an air of haughtiness and offended pride. The monarch, almost out of his wits with perplexity, organized a grand ball for the Court, and a *fête* for the people, and redoubled his efforts to discover the relic. But all these maneuvers failed either to quiet the excitement or to discover the Star, and matters drifted from bad to worse.

It may as well be said right here that Count Gorgei had the Iron Star. Report had not lied when it spoke of an attachment between him and his cousin, the Princess. The two had been lovers almost from childhood, so far as court etiquette permitted or could be evaded, and it was from the Count that the Princess obtained assistance when she found herself being drawn into a hateful political marriage. It was her wit that had planned the secreting of the Star, and the sending of emissaries among the people to stir them up with the news. The Count had taken the relic on board the yacht, and the intention was to keep it out of the way until the marriage should be declared off, and then to return it as mysteriously as it had gone. But all this plan of action was entirely changed by a moment's indiscretion on the part of the Count.

The yacht was off Rhodes, steaming slowly southwards, and her owner was smoking in the saloon. The Iron Star was in his inner pocket, for it never left his person. But from time to time his fever of anxiety concerning it would give him no peace until he had drawn it out, looked at it, felt of it, made sure that it was still in his possession. It was during one of these intervals of contemplation that he sat regarding so intently this rude relic, around which centered so many of his hopes, that he did not hear the door open, nor see the steward softly enter the cabin. When finally awakened to the presence of another, Count Gorgei hastily slipped the Star under his coat, cursing himself for his folly, and hoping that it had escaped the man's notice. The steward made no sign, and went about his business, but the mischief was done, and in half an hour everybody on board knew that the famous Servian relic was among them.

Now the crew were not Servians with whom the secret might have been safe, but Levantines and Greeks, who would have sold their birthrights, if they had ever had any, for a gill of brandy.

They had heard some rumor of the missing treasure before leaving port, and were well aware of its value. Thus they came to the not unnatural conclusion that in the Count they had a daring adventurer, what the newspapers call "a Napoleon of crime," who would endeavor to extort a huge ransom for the Star. The obvious reasoning from this was that they should share the spoil, and next morning the whole ship's company, from the captain down, confronted the Count with their discovery and their demands.

Half the booty was what they wanted, and very reasonable they thought themselves. It was in vain for the Count to protest that there was to be no hint of plunder in the whole affair. The crew differed from him; knives were drawn and pistols shown, and the Count was overargued. The captain of the yacht was a rascally Cretan with a considerable amount of criminal cunning, and he arranged the details. The Count should write a letter to the Servian Government demanding money — much money — for the return of the Star. The Count objected strenuously to doing this, but his life was at stake, and again he was overargued. The outlines of the required letter were explained to him, and he wrote it, and addressed it to the Minister of War. It read as follows: —

The Iron Star of Servia will be restored to the King, at the Island of Laxos, on June 12 of this year.

Not more than five men must be present to receive it, and no Government vessel must lie within signal during the negotiations.

Count Gorgei, of Saska, will be present to vouch for the genuineness of the Star, and in case these conditions are not adhered to, he will be put to death, and the Star sunk in the sea.

The sum of three million francs in gold will be demanded upon delivery of the Star.

A week later this missive was received by the Minister of War, who made haste to call a special cabinet meeting. Aroused to a fever of anxiety, the ministry at once determined to recover the Star at all hazards. To the suggestion of those friendly to the Count that plans be laid for his rescue, the majority opposed the disastrous revelations almost sure to follow the return of Count Gorgei. Besides, as they pointed out, any deviation from the terms of the letter would mean the loss of the Star as well as the death of the Count. So officially that nobleman was aban-

doned. That secretly his friends still worked in his behalf may be inferred from later developments.

Three million francs is a great sum for little Servia to raise, but the Star had to be recovered if it bankrupted the kingdom. The Jews of Belgrade reaped a rich harvest, and national securities fell so alarmingly that the European press began to scent Russian designs on Constantinople, and a panic was very nearly created in Ottoman Bonds. By herculean efforts the State financiers managed to get the required sum together without the strait becoming publicly known, and engaged a Bulgarian warship to cruise in the neighborhood of Laxos — but out of sight — as a safeguard against treachery. And on the twelfth of June, at ten o'clock, this cruiser disembarked the iron-bound chest, in charge of five Servian officers, armed with concealed weapons.

Now Laxos is a mere irregular lump of rock with a precipitous and rocky coast, sloping down to a bit of beach and a little cove at the south, where the money was landed. This little bay is protected by a rocky islet at its mouth, designed to cut off impertinent observation. Here the Servians waited till, about midday, a yacht hove in sight to the southwest.

She steamed up to within two hundred yards of the island, and lowered a boat, which presently landed its occupants on the beach, — Count Gorgei, the captain, and four armed sailors. The Servian officers saluted the Count respectfully.

"Where is the money?" demanded the captain, without preface.

"Here!" replied one of its custodians, indicating the chest. "And the — the other article?"

The captain looked incredulously at the small chest, and demanded that it be opened. The lid was unlocked and lifted, disclosing packed tiers of rouleaux of bluish paper, each marked "500f." The pirate broke one experimentally. It contained twenty bright, new gold coins.

Thus placated, he produced a parcel from his breast, and unfolded the Iron Star. The Servians examined it closely, and the Count after pointing out certain indisputable evidences of its age, swore upon the sacred relic held clasped in his hands that it was the genuine article.

The four sailors were manifestly uneasy and anxious to be off

with their treasure, but the captain was suspicious, and by no means in a hurry. "Next," he said, with a certain cunning complacency, "the money must be counted."

The seamen murmured, but the Cretan insisted upon his precaution. He spread out his coat upon the shingle, and kneeling beside, commenced to count out the rouleaux, having previously ascertained how many the box should contain. Occasionally he broke one open, and the bright gold lay in shining heaps upon the blue cloth. The sailors gathered closely round, excited by the spectacle, and even the Count and the Servians looked with scarcely less interest over the shoulders of the crouching group.

Meanwhile a new influence was entering the game, unnoticed by all. The men on shore were too much absorbed in the treasure to keep a lookout, and in any case the rising rocks to the eastward would have concealed the noiseless electric launch that ran swiftly down the eastern coast, close under the cliffs. She carried sixteen men, there was a Maxim gun mounted in her bows, and she came quite unseen under the shelter of the rugged islet at the harbor mouth. Thus concealed from the eyes of the few men left aboard the yacht, she landed ten of her men on this rock. Then she moved out into full view, in the harbor itself.

Even at this, the group on the beach did not notice her, but the armed men on the islet were seen from the yacht, and were hailed excitedly. In response, three bullets went singing over the steamer's rails, advising those aboard that they were at the mercy of the rifles a hundred yards across the water. The pirates threw themselves flat on the deck to avoid the threatened volley, and the men ashore sprang up and found themselves confronted by the muzzle of a Maxim at ten rods.

The pirates swore impotently, while the Servians clamored for joy, believing that their government had sent them aid. But the launch's crew waited, giving neither shot nor answering cry.

In about two minutes the throbbing of a screw was heard, and a second yacht rounded the end of the island and stopped. She carried no flag, and there were rapid-fire guns mounted along her rail. At her appearance, the launch ran close in shore, and the coxswain called: —

"Is Count Gorgei there?"

"Yes," cried the Count, in answer.

"You are our prisoner. Come aboard." And the Count waded out and boarded the launch, which took her men off the rock, and then, moving to the strange yacht, was hoisted in. This vessel at once got under way and moved off to the southeast at such a rate that in half an hour only her smoke lay in a thin trail along the horizon.

Just how the pirates and the five Servians settled the business of the Iron Star and the gold has never yet been divulged, or whether, indeed, the Count did not carry off the relic with him to the rescuing yacht. Neither the Star, nor the gold, nor the Count's yacht, nor her crew, nor the five Servians have ever reappeared within Servia's ken.

The Count himself appeared at Paris shortly after, and meanwhile popular excitement at Belgrade ran so high that the present impracticability of the Bulgarian alliance was admitted by all parties concerned. Consequently Prince Anton went home by his special train, and the city quieted itself. All newspaper readers will remember the sensational story of the Princess Aline's flight to Vienna, a few months later, where she met Count Gorgei and was married. The pair have presumably lived happily ever since, but they have displayed a decided preference for Paris and Vienna to their native land. Yet it is well understood that Servia is ready to welcome them back with honors on the trifling condition that the Count reveal the present location of the Iron Star. But this, for reasons best known to himself, he has failed to do.

A Barataria Elaine.

BY HENRY E. CHAMBERS.

INTO the northwestern corner of Barataria Bay, one of those many indentations in the coast of Southern Louisiana, extends a small bayou. Up this quiet inlet about half a mile the land attains a height unusual to marshy stretches of country, owing to accumulations of sea shells so vast as to form a miniature island.

Upon this island, surrounded by massive live-oaks whose gnarled limbs, festooned with long pendants of gray Spanish moss, sway lazily in the Gulf breezes, stands a cottage of unique structure. Timbered pillars hold it six feet from the ground. Along its whole front extends a broad porch from which descends a wide stairway to the shell walk leading to the primitive wharf in front.

The cottage is built of nondescript material. Posts, planks, puncheons, slabs, shingles, sheet iron, and patches of zinc — all enter into its composition; but age has so cast her tints of grays, and browns, and brownish greens about the whole structure that all incongruous elements are blended into a pleasing harmony.

Up the front steps the visitor may go, and, whoever he may be, he invariably receives the same greeting from the three occupants. At the head of the steps will stand an old man of massive proportions, ruddy, unwrinkled face, and luxuriant white hair and beard. Framed by the doorway at the left end of the porch, or gallery, will wait questioningly a girl, whose slim figure and spirituelle beauty are emphasized by flowing garments of spotless white, almost Greek in their simplicity. Peering from a small opening at the other end of the gallery will appear a weazened, wrinkled, scowling black face, surmounted by gray, wiry wool. The old man will extend his hand to the visitor; the maiden will silently withdraw from the doorway; and a sliding shutter will be slammed over the opening used by the black for observation.

There are no other houses in the neighborhood. Ten miles down the bay where the scattered fisher settlements begin one may learn, upon inquiry, that the venerable man at the head of the steps is old Majeur; that the girl in the doorway is his granddaughter, Lasthenie; and that the black face belongs to Zabo, a faithful family servant. One may also learn that Majeur went to the island many years ago; that the greater part of his life has been spent in search of the treasure of the pirate smuggler, Lafitte, supposed to have been buried thereabout; and that one must look well in roaming over the island, since the evidence of this life-long search still remains in numberless weed-covered pits, into which the unwary may fall.

As to the granddaughter — well, the swains of Caminada have never given themselves any concern over the girl upon Shell Island. The distance to paddle in a light pirogue is enough to cool the wooing ardor of even young men of Latin race.

Moreover, to them she seems not strong. She would not, in their opinion, be equal to the duties of the Caminada housewife,— duties that include the portering of heavy baskets of oysters, the stringing, in season, of countless catches of wild ducks for the New Orleans markets, and, incidentally, the bearing and rearing of a score or more of children.

To this household, so isolated, so unique, it was an event of red-letter significance when, in the sunset, one November evening, a strange white craft, almost supernatural in its spotlessness, rounded the innermost portion of the inlet and cast anchor in the lagoon-like portion of the bayou, on which the cottage fronted. A pleasure yacht an observer might have guessed, but though everything about it from snowy sails and tautly drawn cordage to white, spotless hull betokened a vessel designed for no gainful usage, it was no pleasure trip that had brought the *Duchess* to this remote corner of the world. A cruise in the tropics had indeed been the ostensible purpose of its owner, Lord Beresford, but the real clue lay in a certain time-yellowed chart, the gift of a dying sailor, in which the location of great treasure was ascribed to a region marked Barataria.

With these details, however, this narrative is concerned only so far as it serves to introduce into the family life at the cottage

the one member of the yacht's party not involved in the quest for treasure. A quest, indeed, Wyatt Astley had engaged in when he became Beresford's guest, but one of subtler nature.

Five years before, Wyatt Astley had gone from a rural shire in England to the art schools of Paris, poor in technique but rich in dreams. At the end of those years he had become a master of coloring and drawing, but his dreams no longer inspired him. That they still lived is evident from the fact that, his apprenticeship finished, he chose for his masterpiece that subject which had for years beckoned to him — the portraiture of Sir Galahad, the Pure. But the inspiration by whose fire alone he could forge success of conception or execution had been frittered away in lesser impulses.

Though perfect in technique and applauded by his fellow-artists, his picture lacked the spiritual quality by which, alone, a painting becomes great.

His Sir Galahad was only a costumed model!

In the light of this self-knowledge Astley had, six months ago, abandoned his profession. This decision, unexplained, undefended, had brought about estrangement from his family, and after weeks of apathy and idleness he had accepted with thankfulness an invitation that would put half the world between him and the scene of his failure.

In short, he had come in search of the draught of forgetfulness.

With his first day at Shell Island, however, the picturesque aspect of that simple habitation, and its unworldly atmosphere had roused the artist in him. Obtaining the good-natured acquiescence of old Majeur, he devised with screens and rugs from the yacht an impromptu studio at one end of the broad gallery. Here he established himself while his companions made their expeditions to various points, old Majeur, meantime, chuckling over the fact that there were other treasure-seeking fools in the world beside himself.

With the old man as model, Wyatt made a number of studies and sketches of great strength and excellence. While he was thus engaged there flitted about him the girlish figure of Lasthenie in its graceful garb of white. Wyatt could not help but observe the fresh, rare beauty of this product of the Louisiana

marshes. He wondered how one sprung from the Latin antecedents which the neighborhood indicated could have hair as yellowy gold as that of the purest Saxon type, and flesh tints as pink and white as are boasted by England's proudest beauties. All about her clung an indescribable air of maidenly reserve and modesty which bespoke purity and innocence of mind and heart. The tear shine which made the whites of her eyes to sparkle at times, even extending as dew dust to the long, drooping lashes, gave indication of deep and easily stirred feeling.

It was while noting all this that an inspiration came to Wyatt, as it comes to many a man in the presence of a pure, good woman. He would turn his back upon the past, and become one of this humble primitive household. He recalled the many instances which history gives of spiritual exaltation following upon renunciation and seclusion. He would reduce the terms of his life to simplest form, tear out the brambles that, crowding upon sincerity and rectitude, had been feeding upon the soil of his finer qualities. Not that he had been any worse than others of his set and class, but he had been no better; and whoever would be a leader of the thought and feeling of his fellowman should himself be above those whom he would have to follow him.

So Wyatt decided to begin anew to make his way to that higher spiritual plane from whose winning he had turned aside. To him Lasthenie became an idealized being. From the spotless page of her pure life unfolding before him he began to study anew the lesson of existence. Never before had he so understood the peculiar fascination which memories and traditions, relics and portraitures of maiden saints have for the minds of devout male worshipers.

And Lasthenie, standing upon the threshold of womanhood when he first found her, crossed over at his coming to the region beyond. All around were voices calling to her, voices as sweet as angel's whisper, for they told of inexpressible happiness. She did not know that they were the voices of love, and that exquisite happiness sometimes meant exquisite pain.

So the *Duchess* sailed away from her fruitless quest, but Wyatt remained behind.

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Some six months after the *Duchess* sailed, Wyatt stood one morning in the gallery studio before a painting which he had examined for the last time, — and found no need of further finishing touch. Once more he had drawn upon the legends of King Arthur for his subject. Upon the easel was a picture of Elaine of Astolat. The maiden was represented as standing by the shield which Launcelot had entrusted to her keeping. One hand held by her side the cover she had broidered; the other was pressed to her bosom as if to still the uncertainty that was clinging about her heart. She had withdrawn her gaze from the shield, had ceased for a time to speculate upon cruel dent and blurred marking. Her attitude was one of meditation. All infinity seemed to look forth from her eyes, and her face was wondrously illumined, — the face of a maiden whose thought was of a lover good, strong, brave, and true, wearing even then her favor upon distant field of journey. Hung in the salon of some art center it were an exquisite example of the ideal in art. Here on Shell Island it was realism itself, for the face, the expression, the pose, the personality, was each that of Lasthenie.

Throughout the time that Wyatt had been at work, Lasthenie entered tirelessly into every one of his plans and suggestions. He had read and reread to her Tennyson's rendering of the story of Elaine, until its spirit seemed to take full possession of her. The wonderful responsiveness of her expression as successive passages were expounded to her had done as much for the work as his own skill. To her he owed it that at last he had painted a picture that would live.

He was now ready to make his way to England. He knew that this product of his brush would there be crowned with laurel. He had a deeper purpose in view, however. It was to become reconciled with his family, so that when he again returned with the Baratarian maiden an agreeable environment would be prepared for her.

He would not tell Lasthenie of the love that had taken full possession of him. She might not yet fully understand, and even if she did, his absence might cause her uneasiness should he knot any more firmly the ties that already bound them. He, however, spoke freely about his contemplated prompt return to Shell Island.

So Zabo was sent to Caminada to leave word that the first oyster-lugger leaving for New Orleans should stop and take the Englishman and his baggage aboard. A day or two afterwards, at daylight in the morning, a hail from the bayou was heard. Wyatt hastily dressed, and, with his picture carefully wrapped and boxed, made ready to go aboard the waiting lugger.

Majeur and Zabo were up, and Wyatt wrung their hands in parting. Lasthenie he did not see, but she, pale faced and moist eyed, was straining her gaze to get a last view of him from behind the edge of her curtained window. Softly he wafted a kiss in her direction, little knowing she was behind the shade. She saw and her sorrow was lightened, but not to such an extent that she did not fling herself upon the floor before the little shrine of Saint Joseph in her room and give broken utterance to prayer until almost exhausted. She prayed for the saint's care of him now making his way to the distant land where perhaps was only oblivion of such as her. She prayed for pity for herself.

After the departure of Wyatt the usual quiet of Shell Island seemed to take on a greater intensity. Into the starved lives of the island's three he had come, imparted a vast store of new ideas and experiences, and left a rich legacy of memories and reflections. He was always uppermost in their minds. Sentences spoken between long intervals of silence were threaded into connectedness by intervening periods of thought of him.

His studio had been left intact as earnest that he would come again. A life of expectancy is one not difficult to live, but when hope sinks into hopelessness the reaction bears heavily upon mind and spirit. What could be keeping him was the question which Lasthenie silently and continually asked herself as the days sped by. Surely he said that it took only fifteen or twenty days to reach his country. He promised, oh, he promised to return!

Much of her time Lasthenie spent in the studio. There, seated upon a low footstool near the easel, she would meditate amid the surroundings once animated by his presence. There was his pallette. How like a shield it was! Every splotch upon its surface was where he had dipped the spear-point of his brush. Had he come into her life only to wound and hurt her? See, there is where he mixed the colors for her arm and shoulder, — a little

carmine, a very little pale yellow, and a great deal of flake white. This blue spot is cobalt. That is what he used for the eyes. Were hers really as blue? How he did look at her while he was at work upon that part of the picture, and how hard it had been for her to gaze as unflinchingly as he wanted her to, and she knowing all the time that his own eyes were steadily upon her! Thus would her thoughts run along.

But months came and went until she counted that eight times had the new-born crescent moon peered in at twilight through the little side window of her modest room. Each time she had carefully posted herself in such manner as to catch the first glimpse of it over her right shoulder; for Zabo, in the days of her earliest recollection, had instilled in her mind the efficacy of this all-compelling ceremony to bring about good fortune.

But the good fortune still delayed. Hope turned into apathy. She was in very truth Elaine, Elaine the lily maid, forgotten and forlorn. Singular it was how the vigor of youth began to leave her limbs, and to what low ebb her vitality was sinking. Men of science are wont to shrug their shoulders at any suggestion of a cause of disease other than a purely physical one. In Lasthenie's case they would have pointed to the surrounding marsh, and laid the blame upon its miasms. Yet sickness of spirit is a reality tangible enough to find expression in any highly tensioned human being; and it was with such sickness that Lasthenie was stricken.

One morning in early October, however, Lasthenie came from her room with a shining face. "She had a good dream," was all that she said to her anxious father; but all that day she sang softly to herself, and that evening she called old Zabo to one side, with a look that made him ejaculate that she surely had her good fortune at last.

But pleasure changed to consternation on the black, wrinkled face, and the bent body, gnarled, knotty, and long limbed as any near-by oak, cringed in an attitude of remonstrance and supplication when the old servant listened to the instructions that his young mistress laid upon him.

Yet silent and grotesquely unwilling as he seemed, Lasthenie knew his devotion; she knew that he would carry out her wishes to the end.

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Once again night descended over the dark waters of Barataria, and found the white yacht, *Duchess*, at anchor before Caminada. Although upon her was one impatient of delay, not until morning would she spread her white wings and sail for the northwest corner of the bay.

Aboard was a lively yachting party, friends and relatives of Wyatt Astley's, who had heard from the artist himself the story of his masterpiece, and had come out with him to meet the original, and reassure her as to the welcome that would await her in England. For the painter of Elaine had not deceived himself. Heart and hand had worked in such harmony as to produce a picture that won the twofold applause of people and critics. In the elation of success he had sought and achieved reconciliation with his family, and what with the renewing of old ties and the weaving of new affiliations months had melted away with the apparent rapidity of years on the stage. Yet all the time the undercurrent of his thoughts had flowed toward Lasthenie. For her he had delayed in London, to establish himself with friends and relatives, critics and art buyers; and to-night as he sat with the gay party on the after-deck he tried vainly to appear one of them. Little by little there stole over him a feeling of depression and uneasiness, until the sound of merry young voices, the tinkle of mandolins, the strumming of guitars, seemed thousands of miles away.

So deep was his reverie that he failed to note, presently, when the music died away, and the eyes of the rest of the party were turned toward a light that moved slowly over the bay. Neither did he hear their whispered questionings as to the nature of that blazing spot of fire, or their awed exclamations as little by little it approached nearer and still nearer to the vessel. He was not roused even when one after another those around him stole to the gunwales, leaning far out to follow the movements of the mysterious light, and to watch emerge from the darkness some low craft to which it was attached.

A long dugout or pirogue it seemed to be, and it moved to the slow and steady stroke of a paddle. And presently as it crept still nearer to the yacht, upon those watching above fell the silence of awe; for stretched out apparently asleep in the center of the little

craft was the form of a maiden draped all in white. Marsh lilies were about her head, clasped in her folded hands, and strewn over her coverlet. In the stern sat a black, grotesque creature, glaring upward and plying the paddle. Back of him, extended over the wake of the canoe-like boat, was a long pole, at the end of which was fastened a pan-like utensil. Upon this had been placed some sticks of resinous wood, whose flame was now casting a ghastly light over the whole.

And suddenly the flaring light fell upon the face of Astley, and his eyes were unsealed.

With an exclamation long remembered by those who heard it, he sprang to the taffrail. The negro saw him.

"Ay yi yah! De *Bon Dieu!* M'sha As'lee!" the gnome-like creature gibbered. "Hyeh Lasthenie. Yas, das she. Das Lasthenie. She say yo' come when she daid. She learn it in a dream. She know, *pauvre petite*. She mek me do lak dat, — mek me tek heh to Caminada lak dat?"

The black continued, little heeded by the spell-bound spectators, as if communing with himself aloud.

"She say, 'Zabo, yo' bin one good nigga'.' Me, I all time do lak she say. She say, 'Zabo, when I daid, yo' tek pirogue. Yo' put me in pirogue. Yo' cov' me all wid white, — no coffin, no nuttin', only white dress, white sheet. Yo' cross my han' lak dat. Yo' get some lily; yo' put planty, planty — some by d' haid, some by d' han', some here some dere. Yo' get in pirogue. Yo' paddle *doucement*, — slow, slow. Yo' ain' got fo' hurry, Zabo. Yo' tek me to Caminada. Yo' tek me to d' pries'. He goin' put me in d' groun'.' Me, I do lak she say."

The whole story was evident at a glance. Wyatt felt as if a hand were grasping at his throat, and cords were being tightly drawn around his heart. He would have fallen to the deck had not Beresford stepped up and put an arm around him.

"Order out the yawl, Beresford," he brokenly said. "I go to Caminada to-night. I must be there when she lands. God help me, those lilies are for me. I delayed too long."

Wyatt was ashore awaiting the corpse when it landed. He was in the little chapel when the priest performed the last sad rites. He and Zabo were the only mourners at the grave side,